



Resilience: the 2020 State of the Village

Interconnected and interdependent as we are, 2020 has reminded us of the many ways Perry's destiny is caught up in events not fully within our control.

On Memorial Day I often reflect on this idea: that this country is nothing more - or should I say nothing less - than thousands of small communities sharing a common purpose. E Pluribus Unum. Out of Many, One.

How we act during difficult times reveals our true nature. This year in Perry - in the face of a pandemic and an economic depression - I have been moved even more often than usual by the hard work, advocacy, generosity and unquenchable spirit of our citizens, our organizations, our businesses and our village staff.

You know who you are! The entrepreneurs who re-invent and re-emerge. The essential workers who serve our needs and keep us healthy and safe. The residents who double their efforts to support those local businesses. The citizens who donate to vital services, distribute gift certificates or otherwise place their bets on the "Perry Project". And the organizations doing the fundraising. Finally, the advocates who continue to fight for village priorities.

I can't say it enough. Perry is a Yes community. An Engaged community. Thanks to each and every one of you for stepping up during this year of crisis.

It isn't over yet, so keep doing what you're doing. Keep each other safe. At whatever level you can afford it, support our small businesses. Perry 2030 relies upon it.

*** THE GOOD WORKS

Here at the Village, good work goes on as well. We deal with crises, and respond to urgent needs, sure; but we also pause to re-calibrate our trajectory. The village is initiating a series of "Perry 2030" focus groups to answer the questions: Where are we going? What does Perry look like in 10 years? What is our plan to get there?

We've been having that forward-looking discussion for years through numerous steering committees, focus groups, comprehensive plans, boards and impromptu strategic planning chats. There are so many pieces already in place, projects underway and planned. And so much more to do. Here are just a few:

Beach. I saw many of you at the open house for the Village of Perry Public Beach at Silver Lake last month. It's the result of dozens of stakeholders working with our design consultants over several years, and funding gathered from people like you via numerous local organizations, and state agencies. The stunning new pavilion, restrooms, plantings and natural lake access have re-invigorated one of Perry's unique, great and long-slumbering assets.

Trail. A similar process is underway on the design of the Silver Lake Trail that will connect the beach - via public ways - to an improved "downtown waterfront" creek behind Main Street, another slumbering asset. Construction is slated for 2021.

Center Street. One step behind that is a planning grant recently received that will allow us to address Center Street's biggest challenges: pedestrian safety and connectivity (linking schools and major employers to the offerings of businesses), multi-modal transportation, accessibility, and its character as a gateway to the village. Design recommendations will be completed in 2021, and then we can seek funding for implementation. It's the same process we followed with Main Street, the Beach and the Trail.

Dam. We have installed new gates on the control dam the village operates at Federal Street, after the failure of the old gates forced us to act quickly. The lake is a regional asset, and this incident has certainly focused us on the leadership of the Silver Lake Watershed Commission — composed of all the municipalities whose residents rely on lake quality, lake level management and domestic water all supported by the dam. We will be pro-active going forward in seeking intermunicipal support for planned maintenance and improvement.

Sewer Treatment Plant. While we're talking about being pro-active: later this year will kick-off phase 2 construction on \$10 million of improvements to our wastewater treatment plant that should expand our capacity, keep us in compliance, and make Perry attractive for commercial and residential growth. Construction should be complete in 2021.

Village Hall. 2021 is also the year we will add an elevator and stairs at the Village Hall. This will unlock the use of our magnificent, underutilized 2nd floor community room, whose renovation can then follow.

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ON GRANTS

Some people ask if money from one grant could be better used on something else. So it bears mentioning that grant opportunities are always geared to specific goals set by the granting agencies, and can be used to support only those specific projects. Thus we cannot take a Village Hall ADA grant and use it to build a better dam, for example. You will know by now that the village has been very aggressive in partnering with state and federal agencies to get work done in Perry. The choices are not binary. In other words, because we are pursuing one thing does not mean we are sacrificing another. It's not either-or. It's both-and! We do many things simultaneously and it is exactly that synergy that is propelling Perry forward.

ON STAFF

If you're plugged in enough to read this you'll probably know the village has seen some staff turnover, for a variety of reasons. We see a great opportunity to put in place policies, procedures and a re-structuring of positions and roles to ensure a high-performing, high-morale village team, rowing in the same direction. A team that understands Why as well as How we do things. I am confident that 2021 will see a hard-working village team well-equipped to consistently deliver the goods you expect for your tax dollars, and to execute the projects enumerated above.

JUMPSTARTING THE VIRTUOUS CYCLE

All of this takes us back to the goal of sustaining a virtuous cycle of investment. Such investment in improved conditions (infrastructure, appearance and amenities) fortifies our community's image, resulting in improved market demand, which in turn grows our tax base and thus our village's fiscal capacity to continue to invest while keeping taxes lower. That is a recipe for long-term success - and we are nothing if not in it for the long haul.

Your Village Board welcomes your input and seeks your involvement. You can always contact me at rhauser@villageofperry.com, or come find me Saturdays 11-noon at Perry Farmers' Market or, starting in October, I'll find another socially distanced venue to continue our tradition of "Coffee Hour With the Mayor".

POSITIVE METRICS

- **\$55 million invested.** The total amount invested in Perry in the past 10 years - public, private, infrastructure, amenities.
- **30 grants managed, totaling \$8 million.** We've applied for many more, secured and leveraged significant funding from the state, and successfully managed these programs, all on behalf of village interests.
- **42% increase in village's capital assets.** That's from \$9 to over \$13 million when auditors added up the change in value of all the infrastructure in the past 5 years.
- **27% rise in village's total property valuation in 10 years.** Due in large part to a combination of investments large and small, along with increased demand.
- **5% decrease in village tax rate over 10 years.** For comparison, that's during a timeframe when other county villages have needed to increase their rates by 4%, 18%, 32% and 52%.
- **0 Fiscal Stress.** Zero is the optimal fiscal stress score that the state's independent audit can award a community. Perry is one of only 10 villages in the 60-village Finger Lakes Region to achieve it. This measure takes into account fund balance, operating deficits, cash position, and overall debt service.
- **80 residential units added in 10 years.** My informal scorecard shows at least this many: new homes, vacant upper floors downtown and, of course, the Knitting Mill Apartments. This does not include local developers who have been renovating some of our existing rental units throughout the village.
- **204 improved properties.** Meanwhile, that's how many properties have been brought into compliance due to our property maintenance outreach efforts in just the last 5 years.
- **30 net new businesses, 28 rehabbed buildings and 105 new workers added downtown since 2005.** Overall, the village has added 445 new jobs over that period, thanks to our large employers and our many small businesses.
- **#1 in permits issued.** Those new and expanding businesses, the downtown renovation and all the residential improvements are the reason the Village has been first in permits issued in Wyoming County for the last 5 years.
- **10% increase in average home sale price each of the last two years.** Meanwhile, the inventory of homes for sale has dropped 22%. Demand creates scarcity, and scarcity drives value.